Our articles in this issue are about the Klamath County Museums.

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Bonanza Cemetery Receives $5000 grant

This summer, the Bonanza cemetery board received a $5000 grant from the Oregon Commission on Historic Cemeteries and the Oregon Parks and Recreation Department, funded by the Oregon Lottery. The cemetery added another $4,995. The grant will be used to replace crumbling foundations and reset and seal headstones in the cemetery.

We all hoped that this Fall would be different. That we could finally meet safely, see some familiar faces and enjoy programs together.

That is not what’s happening. In the Spring, the Historical Society presented three Zoom programs, Women’s History in March, Bill Kitt Part One in April and Bill Kitt Part Two in May. These programs are now on YouTube and can be accessed from the Historical Society Website.

Our Fall programs will be the 100th Anniversary of the Link River Dam by Moss Driscoll on September 23 via Zoom and Todd Kepple’s Google Maps in October. This program will be online also. Date and method to be announced.

Museum Happenings

Check the Midge for museum details and a list of other cultural happening in the community. Get on the list by sending your email to midge@co.klamath.or.us
The Rich and Continuing History of the Klamath County Museum

By: Marle Jandreau

Researching the history of the Klamath County Museum, I found an article from 2014, Oregon Historical Society, OHQ Vol. 115, No. 4, entitled “Klamath Armory and Auditorium – Klamath County Museum’s Biggest and Most Important Artifact” written by Judith Hassen. What a treasure-trove of information on what started out as the Klamath Armory in 1935 (funded with county and city funds, and a federal grant from President Franklin D. Roosevelt’s Public Works Administration).

Over the decades, the Armory was used as both a military facility and an auditorium for community entertainment. There were dances, club events, boxing, wrestling, circuses and nationally known musicians passing through Klamath heading to the bright lights of Portland and Seattle. Just a few of the big names were Duke Ellington, The Sons of the Pioneers, Tex Williams, Lawrence Welk, Gene Krupa, Tommy and Jimmy Dorsey and Hank Thompson.

In the 1950s and 1960s, Rock-and-Roll and R&B bands, including “Fats” Domino, Little Richard, Chuck Berry, Fats Waller, and B.B. King performed at the Klamath Armory before heading north on Highway 97 to bigger venues.

As the revenues dropped for supporting the Klamath Armory, the city agreed to sell its half of the Armory to the county for $1.00.

On February 22, 1970, the Klamath County Museum opened, and 1,220 visitors poured in to see how their familiar Armory was re-invented.

When I moved to Klamath Falls in 2013, I was fortunate enough to be introduced to The Klamath County Museum by a friend at The Running Y. After perusing the exhibits at the museum and learning more about The Basin history, I started going on museum tours and outings. I remember tours of old lumber camps, old mills, old barns of Klamath County, and guided tours in what I call Old Town Klamath.

Then there were cemetery tours, where the “residents” came to life and told their stories standing by their graves.

I recall hoofing it on a nine-mile trek from Olene to Dairy and on another adventure, bushwhacking up a hillside to a beautiful old highway overlook. There have also been kayaking outings and stargazing presentations on the lawn in front of the museum when the meteors appear.
With the seemingly endless events put on by the Klamath County Museum, often expertly led by the Museum Manager Todd Kepple, I thought it would be interesting to hear of other people’s thoughts about the museum. I reached out to friends, most at The Running Y, and asked for their take on how the museum affects their lives and our community. And here we go:

“I have so many wonderful memories of museum outings, it’s hard to pick just one. One of my favorite activities is the annual fitness hikes. They used to always be in May, my birthday month, so I could usually entice one or more friends to join the adventure with me. I loved the canal ditches that started at the Thompson’s farm, the Hagelstein Park, the Fort Klamath, the walk to Dairy, the 7 Hills of Klamath… I could go on, but you get the idea. The best part was they all ended with a BBQ… you can’t get better than that! Thanks to Todd, I have some great memories!”

Sherry Price

“Through the years, I have enjoyed many aspects of the Klamath County Museum. The various tours I have been involved with have been a great combination of education, fun and some on the athletic side.

I have learned about how the city’s water district functions, tree identification, history of Klamath and the lumber industry and much, much more. The fact that most of these tours are offered free of charge is an additional bonus.

Todd Kepple is extraordinary in his knowledge on vast subjects, and I know any tour that he leads will be worth the time. I recently signed up for the trolley tour and am looking forward to that adventure.”

Sheree Everett

“I enjoyed learning about Klamath Basin on native plant walks (i.e., the Skillet Handle at The Running Y) and historic field trips (i.e., Spencer Creek). It’s always enjoyable to see new places and learn new things to feed our inquisitive-mind nature. Thanks to Klamath County Museum for sponsoring outreach activities about the cultural and natural history in our community.”

Gary Vequist

“I have been to the Klamath County Museum with my husband, a few of my classes, and very recently, with an adult grandchild. I have always left wanting more time to look at the exhibits. My favorite exhibit is the one about the Japanese bombing using balloons. Without this exhibit, I never would have known that the six victims (five children) who died outside of Bly, Oregon, were the only casualties in the continental U.S. during WWII. That wasn’t in my history books!

Museums always open my eyes and leave me wanting more. I will continue to take my out-of-state guests to the Klamath County Museum.”

Beth Zemke

“I wanted to share my wonderful experience with the Klamath County Museum. Several years ago, I bought a property in Pacific Terrace. The house
was about 100 years old. I went to the museum and spoke with them about getting any type of history on the house, and for $20 they researched the house from the time that it was built all the way through the years. They then gave me a comprehensive list of all the prior owners, and any news articles and/or pictures pertaining to the house. It was wonderful! They were so thorough and so kind! I just wanted to let everyone know of this service for anyone who might own a historic property!!”  

Danielle Cartwright

“Todd’s nature walks spotlighting vegetation native to this area: Moore Park and the Skillet Handle; Night at the Cemetery – both as actors and spirit guides; Linkville Cemetery Annual Cleanup; the car tours with audio by Todd of historic sites in Klamath Falls – Marine Barracks, Kingsley Field; the historic building near the KUHS athletic field; the fitness hike in 2006 down Old Fort Road from the Marine Barracks to the YMCA – in the rain; the museum’s annual plant sale, for which Todd and Dan travel to Bend to pick up the plants and then sell them to interested community members.

Our favorite one involved the summer bus trip to the Fort Klamath area where we stopped at Bill Nicholson’s for lunch and a tour of his two-barn history museums filled with his family’s history of their time in the Fort Klamath area. His ranch is a Century Ranch. There we ate a delicious lunch served by the Fort Klamath Ladies Civic Club, and we were witness to a young lady who demonstrated horse-mounted cattle herding.

There was then a judging contest to guess the weight of the lead bull on the ranch. Rich was within ten pounds of the bull’s 2,000 + lb. weight. He won a 1920’s 10-cent milk bottle from the Cloverdale Dairy which is a collector’s item and which we cherish. All this was arranged by Todd Kepple Museum Manager and Liz Budy, who was an integral part of the Klamath County Historical Society and planned many outings… this being her last one.”  

Richard and Doy Touslee

“My favorite museum experiences have been the live events using actors. I loved the historical cemetery tour. Actors would step out from behind the headstone and reminisce about their lives. The most touching was the mother and father holding their baby. They had all died from the Spanish influenza pandemic.

There was also the tour of the Baldwin Hotel. We would go from room to room and an actor would portray one of the residents.”  

Susie Hasselbrink
“I have been fortunate to attend a few outings with Todd. His knowledge of this area is amazing. A walk west of the Running Y focused on White Oaks. I learned so much about these trees, including the fact this is the eastern-most region in the Cascades where they grow. Todd is a perfect fit for this community. Hoping that more people in Klamath County appreciate him, the staff and the museum.”  **Barry West**

“After relocating to Klamath Falls several years ago, I found myself feeling disorientated. I realized I had been very comfortable and familiar with my previous home, its surroundings, geology and history but knew very little about my new environment here in Klamath Falls. It wasn’t until I visited the Klamath County Museum that this began to change. As I walked the exhibits, the Klamath story unfolded with displays of actual artifacts, rocks, photos and stories. Everything from the volcanic geology that formed the area to the modern forces shaping the Basin were all laid out in easy-to-understand displays. There is enough information there to warrant many future visits to the museum.”  **Frank Hovey**

“I’ve enjoyed several of the museum tours/outings and have been pleasantly surprised by the knowledge of Todd Kepple. I recall two outings (old live theaters in KF, and oak trees on The Skillet Handle) which were so interesting and informative. I’m always sad when I can’t attend one of these presentations due to being out of town, etc. Kudos to the museum and all it has to offer!!”  **Janelle Saigeon**

“I just moved away, but still own a townhouse at The Running Y. I loved that the museum had their native plant sale every summer. It always sold out. As a lifetime lover of native plants, I also loved that the museum had so much information, and that their garden incorporated so many different native plants. Maybe Klamath Falls needs a botanical garden, because a LOT of people showed up!

The museum was instructional, and I enjoyed bringing kids to see all of the unique exhibits.”  **Jo Duthie**

“When I moved here in 2007, I had little knowledge of our local area. Shortly thereafter, I had the occasion to host a group of over 20 individuals, from all over the U.S., all school classmates. Lacking local-area knowledge, I contacted the museum and Todd Kepple provided some planning assistance. He did much more than that...Todd organized a bus tour to Crater Lake, with him as “tour guide.” We enjoyed multiple stops along the way for a ‘show-and-tell’ of local history and unique attractions. He also arranged for a ranger-guided tour of Crater Lake National Park. What a delightful day!

Those visitors were most impressed with our community, our history and the beauty of nature which surrounds us.
Some have returned to visit; all were thoroughly impressed with Klamath Falls. From that point on, I became a big fan of our museum and staff.

Later, I enjoyed working with and through the museum on other projects. I saw the enjoyment of visitors watching a “Walk Back in Time” program the museum provided at some local tourist venues. I later joined the AMTRAK Docent cadre through the museum. That program focused on showing AMTRAK passengers our community, the magnificent Cascades, the diverse natural resources and discussing Oregon and Klamath County history. Most of those passengers on that four-hour train trip to Eugene were astounded by our resources and history. We always received thanks and applause for our presentations.

Through many years, our museum has continued to provide an awareness of those resources and history to thousands of visitors, many of whom have come back to enjoy our hospitality. That is one of the primary purposes of the museum’s outreach, and they have done it well.” Patrick O’Donnell

“Todd is exceptional as the Klamath County Museum Manager. He started “The Midge,” a digital newsletter, that is widely disseminated in the community, promoting the arts and entertainment opportunities in the Basin. [To receive this free online subscription keeping you up on local activities, including museum events and outings, Google museum@klamathcounty.org]
Todd also has been instrumental in getting proper funding for the museum through increased county tax funding. He did this primarily in reaching out to the community through many museum-initiated activities. These activities promoted educating the public in the history of the Klamath Basin, mixing in principles of physical activities with the annual history walk and the Link River Project.

Todd was and is instrumental in protecting Conger Heights by bringing the history of Conger Heights and promoting public awareness to the issue.

On his own time, Todd removes vegetation from public places that is both fire prone and unsightly... bringing the public places back into their historical state, based on earlier historical pictures.

Todd revived the docent project in getting trained interpreters/docents to ride on AMTRAK to Eugene and return. This project brings the Klamath Basin in a very positive light to those AMTRAK patrons who would never give our Basin any thought as they course through it from south to north or vice versa.

He was instrumental in opening up the vegetation-clogged view of the Link River Falls/Klamath Falls, on the Link River Trail, devoting many hours in cutting through to the river bank that provides the view.

Todd promoted and began the Cemetery History Walk, which continues on, usually in conjunction with the Halloween weekend.

He initiated an auto tour, using a broadcast system that utilized participants’ auto radio... a great idea.

Some of Todd's many public programs focused on our lumber mills, timber industry, farming and agriculture, Basin federal water projects, WWII incidents, OTI/OIT history, early county and city government, Applegate Trail, early transportation routes, etc. In many of his programs, he has invited guest speakers and authors, who amplify the story and history. Todd has used the museum building as a venue in a very favorable manner in promoting the value of the museum.”  

Mike Smith

I thought it was fitting to put Mike Smith’s comments at the end of the article, summing up with a paean to Todd Kepple. He deserves it. Thank you, Todd.
The Baldwin Hotel by Mary Nobel

Crazy! That’s what people said when, in 1903, George Baldwin purchased a steeply sloped and mostly basalt rock piece of land adjacent to his hardware store on Main Street.

It took workmen nearly four months, using picks, shovels and sledgehammers, to clear the way for masons to begin to build the exterior of the building.

The original plan was to use native stone, but George Baldwin had other ideas. He wanted an appearance of quality for his new building and that meant a brick building. Since the county high school was being built about the same time, Baldwin did what any enterprising businessman would do – he built his own brick yard.

The first plans called for a three-story building. The hardware store would occupy the first floor while the second and third floors would be offices and apartments. Before the building was completed, however, Baldwin changed his mind and added a fourth floor.

With a thriving hardware business and rented offices and apartments, you would think Baldwin would be content. Not George Baldwin. Always an innovator, in 1910 he had a new idea: convert the building into a hotel.

The staircase with the adjoining building was enclosed, two rooms were added in the upper portion and other rooms were converted from apartments to hotel rooms. The hotel opened in 1911.

Meanwhile, the Baldwin daughter, Maud, became a professionally trained photographer. She traveled throughout Klamath County taking photos of individuals and landscapes that caused some to label the area “the Switzerland of America.”

Baldwin died in 1920, and his wife and daughter, Maud, ran the hotel until 1923. At that time Andy and Cordelia Moore took over. The family with five children lived and worked in the hotel until 1951 when their daughter, Vera, and her husband, Mart Jones, became the owners.
In 1977, the state of Oregon inspected and declared the hotel, heated by individual wood stoves, unsafe. Installing central heating to a four-story building was too expensive, and the Jones had no alternative but to sell what they could and leave.

That’s when the citizens of Klamath County got busy. They knew how historically valuable the Baldwin building was. It was on the National Register of Historic Buildings after all.

Enter the county commissioners: Floyd Wynn, Nell Kuonen and Lloyd Gift. They purchased the building in 1977 with the idea of converting it into a museum under the direction of the Klamath County Museum.

Lots of elbow grease followed, much of it done by volunteers. Community members also donated clothing, period furniture and other furnishings.

By 1978 the museum was ready and opened its doors to the public. Only a few rooms were on display in 1978, but through the years more and more rooms have become museum pieces.

Today, visitors to the Baldwin Hotel Museum can marvel at a turn-of-the-century kitchen, a general store, a doctor’s office, a movie theater, a cobbler’s shop and much more. Several stops on the tour give the visitor a glimpse of the rock foundation that today still stabilizes the building. Those who opt for the full tour see Maud Baldwin’s studio and dark-room on the fourth floor.

Maud Baldwin’s photos are exhibited throughout the museum yet another view of the county’s historic past. The gallery on the second floor is mostly dedicated to her work.

As visitors tour the spacious building, they can also come to appreciate the foresight of George Baldwin. No, he didn’t envision a museum, but he did aspire to a building that would endure and become a landmark in Klamath County.

He succeeded, and his legacy lives on.
As the migration westward grew, so did conflict with the Native people. In the Klamath Basin and along the Applegate trail, settlers faced increasing resistance from the Modoc tribes.

In 1862, three years after statehood, the Oregon legislature asked the U.S. Army to build a fort to protect the settlers and the immigrants passing through the area. In 1863, Captain William Kelly led C Troop, First Oregon Cavalry, into the Wood River Valley to build Fort Klamath.

In this beautiful spot, the fort was built. The area of the fort proper was over one thousand acres with an additional three thousand acres for a hay reserve to supply the cavalry horses.

The first building was a sawmill to provide material for the rest of the dwellings and other buildings. They included officers’ quarters, barracks for the troops, storehouses, a hospital, a bakery, the arsenal, and stables for the livestock.
The fort played a major role in the Modoc war of 1872-1873. During that conflict, members of the Modoc tribe, under a white flag and in a peace tent, shot and killed General Edward Canby and the Reverend Eleazer Thomas. Alfred Meacham, the Indian agent for the Klamath Reservation, was wounded.

When the conflict ended, six Modoc members who were involved in that incident were arrested and tried for the killings. All six were found guilty and sentenced to hang. They were Captain Jack, Schonchin John, Black Jim, Boston Charley, Barrcho, and Sioux. Barrcho and Sioux were granted clemency by President Grant and sentenced to life in prison. The other four men were hanged, and their graves are on the site of the old fort.

By 1886, the fort had thirty-nine buildings. In 1887, President Glover Cleveland ordered the fort closed. It then became part of the Bureau of Indian Affairs. The last soldiers left the fort in 1890.

At some point, most of those buildings had their materials salvaged by locals for use on their own property. The land was sold off and used mostly for grazing. Eventually the land became private property. In 1966, the William Zumbrum family donated six acres where the original fort had stood to Klamath County. The county purchased an additional two acres. The area became part of the county park properties.

A log cabin was the first structure added to the area and was built on the site of the fort guardhouse in 1969. The site of the fort was added to National Register of Historic Places on October 7, 1971.

The site was opened as a county park in September of 1972. It was formally dedicated the following year, August 1973. The Fort Klamath jail was moved onto the museum grounds in 1977 and the old Klamath Agency post office was moved to the museum grounds in 1998. In October is 2001, the log cabin was destroyed by fire. In 2003 the New Fort Klamath Museum building opened.
Book Review by Mary Nobel

Klamath County Museum gift shop has a limited supply (6) of Volumes 1 and 2 of “WAR DRUMS Along the Rogue.”

The volumes detail the struggle between the Native Americans of southern Oregon and northern California and the early frontiersmen. The Rogue River Indian war was long – 1851-56 – and is often incorrectly reported. These volumes seek to correct that.

Newly cited primary sources are introduced allowing the reader to understand the deep-seated cultural ties the Native Americans had to their homeland.

The war was a series of campaigns with peace in between. The last was a full-scale war from October 1855 to June 1856.

The first volume chronicles the early campaigns while volume 2 deals with the 1855-1856 war.

Each volume is priced at $25.
The Echoes is a KCHS book series which was started in 1963. The first issue was in 1964 and the last issue was released in 1979. The museum gift shop still has many copies of the Echoes for sale. Each book is $10 and the entire bundle of all 16 is just $100. All profits go to the Historical Society. The books are treasure trove of historic information. They would also make great gifts.

Did you know?—The Trumpeters and Echoes are now online and can be viewed at: http://klamathcountyhistoricalsociety.org